



San Diego City Attorney **CASEY GWINN**

MEDIA RELEASE

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CITIZEN ARRESTED BY CITY ATTORNEY PLEADS GUILTY

Illegal Dumpers on Fiesta Island Are Prosecuted

San Diego, CA — Mario Leon, the man San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn placed under citizen's arrest for illegal dumping in Fiesta Island, pleaded guilty in San Diego Superior Court. Leon paid a \$250 fine, the mandatory minimum fine for dumping small quantities of waste on public property. To properly dispose of the wood at the City landfill, would have only cost him approximately \$10.

Leon, a twenty-one year old man from El Cajon, was in the wrong place at the wrong time. On January 18, 2002, he decided to dump a load of waste wood on Fiesta Island. Unfortunately for Leon, he picked a spot to dump his wood near the location of a press conference being held by City Attorney Gwinn and San Diego Councilmember Donna Frye. The purpose of the press conference was to announce a crackdown on illegal trash dumping in San Diego City Parks and Beaches.

San Diego City Attorney Gwinn noticed the truck laden with wood drive by the press conference. He and Councilmember Frye followed the truck. Leon was confronted by City Attorney Gwinn and admitted he was dumping the wood. A citizen's arrest was made by Gwinn, and Leon was given a ticket.

Last summer a special enforcement partnership was created between the San Diego City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit, the City's Park and Recreation Department Rangers, and the San Diego Police Department's Northern Division to address the illegal dumping issues around Mission Bay Park. To date, eleven people have pleaded guilty to dumping trash around Mission Bay Park.

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The wood Leon dumped in this case was painted and contained nails. Illegal dumping at Mission Bay degrades the marine environment. Construction and demolition debris, such as painted, stained, or treated wood, drywall, or metallic debris, all release harmful chemicals into the bay. Hazardous wastes such as paint, paint thinner, and cleaning products are often dumped at the same time as other construction wastes. When landscaping debris is dumped, it can result in the growth of non-native species that invade the natural habitat. Burning trash or demolition debris results in toxic ash being deposited on the shoreline or in the water. Burning trash for the purpose of disposal is a state crime.

Dumping also costs the citizens of San Diego for clean up. A Park and Recreation Department official estimates that the City cleans up 1,100 tons of illegally dumped trash is cleaned up from around Mission Bay every year, costing taxpayers \$40,000.

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